

Statement for the Record

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House Natural Resources Committee

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Washington, DC

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My intrigue with the Grand Staircase-Escalante began in the early 90's when I was proofing my daughter's senior paper on the establishment of the monument. Little did I dream that our family would be moving to Escalante, Utah and purchasing our business, Escalante Outfitters in 2008. We were open 8 months a year with 8 employees. Today we have expanded the season to 10 months with 28 employees. Escalante Outfitters is a tourism-based business with cabins, campground, gear store, café and guide services. We have financially doubled in sales since 2008. But more importantly we have provided jobs for our community and have become active citizens in our small town. As a member of the Garfield County Travel Council I am proud of what our county has accomplished in promoting tourism throughout Southern Utah.

Our National Parks are magnificent but the Monument is different. The monument provides an opportunity for solitude and reflection, exploration, and a moment of disconnect from our hectic lives. Every child should experience the quietness of the desert, the flow of a stream leading to a waterfall, or lying under the glory of the unobstructed Milky Way. Over and over again we hear the stories of our travelers who are so thankful for this uniquely American experience. People are truly yearning for this type of experience that only the wilderness can provide.

Early on we learned there were many misconceptions of the national monument. As the years passed these misconceptions began to subside a bit and we began to see long-term residents building resorts, restaurants, a hardware store, a rural clinic, a small manufacturing plant, and plans began to be made for a science institute where local dinosaurs are curated and natural history could be preserved. Unlike many rural towns we were not dying, we are changing and we are thriving.

In December of 2016 the Chamber of Commerce board agreed not to support the resolution to reduce the monument. No members declined their support of our position. We began collecting letters from our businesses and concerned citizens to request a voice in any of the forthcoming decisions. In March 2017 we traveled to Washington DC with 120 letters in hand to give to the newly appointed Secretary Ryan Zinke. We met with representatives that assured us that all correspondence would be answered. Two years later we have yet to receive a response. We went back home and tried every avenue we could to be heard but, Sec. Zinke came and went without meeting with our Chamber of Commerce or any pro-monument businesses. We were disheartened when Sec. Zinke toured the monument but

would not meet with our local business owners. We traveled to Kanab hoping for an audience, once again, we were denied. In the one public meeting that Garfield County held about reducing the Monument there was not enough room to seat all the citizens and we were asked to sit on one side of the room if you supported the monument and the other side if you opposed the monument. Friends and neighbors divided.

When the President issued the proclamation to reduce the monument nearly in half we were still waiting to be recognized. We are concerned about our livelihood. Our guests are asking questions about the future of the monument and we have no concrete answers. Last season many people remarked, "We decided to visit before the monument is destroyed." This year we have had a slow start and our family is concerned for our future. Our family has put all we have into Escalante. The monument is our livelihood.

As a practical woman I ask you "Is injecting this much economic uncertainty for the future and the legal cost of this battle worth it? "

Can we sit together not on opposite sides of the room but face to face and come up with better solutions? I'm back in Washington today with the hope that this committee will begin truly listening to the American people.